

Testimony of Shelagh McClure, Chairperson of the Connecticut Council on
Developmental Disabilities Before the Appropriations Committee

March 6, 2015

Senator Bye, Representative Walker and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on Governor Malloy's proposed biennium budget for the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). My name is Shelagh McClure, and I am the Chairperson of the Connecticut Council on Developmental Disabilities (Council).

The budget proposed by Governor Malloy for DDS would lead you to believe that he has been absent from this state for the last two years. Has he not heard the pleas of he parents on the residential Waiting List crisis? That there are over 2,000 people waiting for residential services, including more than 700 whose situation is, by any definition, critical? This budget includes not one single additional dollar to reduce that waiting list. That is a travesty that I hope you, the Appropriations Committee, will address.

But at least as bad, the Governor proposes to completely eliminate funding for day services for all high school graduates for the next two years. I want you to imagine yourself as a 21 year old with a developmental disability who has just finished school, having been promised a world of independence and inclusion, only to be told that we have nothing for you--nothing. You are not worth one dollar to the State of Connecticut. I know that sounds harsh, but how else should I interpret this budget proposal? And if enacted, what will the result of this terrible decision be? Another waiting list for services. Because let's be clear, you cannot suspend services for two years for hundreds of individuals and expect that you will be able to serve twice as many people, when and if we are on better budget footing in two years.

The drastic reduction to the Voluntary Services program is equally if not more cruel and promises to leave many families in desperate situations. Have we decided that resorting to the emergency room is a better approach than coordinated services for our adolescents with difficult diagnoses and behaviors? I thought not, but this proposal does just that.

The Council knows that the fiscal situation is bad, and money for services must come from somewhere. If it must be from within the DDS budget, then we offer the following: despite their exorbitant cost, the Governor's budget does not contain a single proposal to reduce the populations at our state run institutions through accelerated community placements of residents, or to put the institutions on a path to closure. They cost on average \$400,000 per person per year-- vs. \$130,000 for a privately operated group home-- and the closure of these institutions over the next five years would free up much

needed funds to help pay for services, not just for the 500 residents that live in the institutions, but also for the thousands that currently go without services.

In the immediate term, the DDS system has staggering amounts of overtime. For example, in FY 2014:

- at Southbury Training School, 63 workers made over \$50,000 in overtime-- that is over and above whatever they made in salary-- and 4 made over \$100,000. Over \$16 million was paid in overtime on a payroll of \$49 million--that's 33% over and above the payroll at Southbury.

- System wide, on a payroll of \$185 million, an additional \$45 million was paid out by DDS in overtime--that's 24% over and above the payroll.

How can this be allowed, just as a matter of fiscal accountability? This overtime mismanagement cannot be tolerated any longer, not while we are telling high school graduates that we have no money for their day services, and families of adolescents with dual diagnoses that we have no money to pay for treatment and in home services, and aging caregivers that we have no place for their adult child with I/DD to live until the last caregiver dies. You can and should demand that overtime be reduced and that the savings be directed to fund desperately needed services.

In closing, I want to state that the Council wholeheartedly supports the legislative agenda put forth by the I/DD Caucus. What better time than a year of serious fiscal constraints to be forward-looking, to offer innovative, cost effective solutions that will serve more people, not less. Closing institutions, reducing the Waiting List by establishing a Trust Fund, and providing a living wage to private providers who serve the large majority of people with I/DD in this state are exactly the types of proposals that should have been in the Governor's budget, but sadly were not. The I/DD Caucus' agenda reflects the Council's priorities, and we hope it will reflect the Legislature's as well.